

THE PRINCIPLES OF
POSITIVE
LEADERSHIP



Lessons for Positive Living

MIKE MAGEE, MD

Drawing from life experiences to illustrate his message, Dr. Mike Magee has written an inspirational book which gives each of us the tools for positive living. Through stories and reminiscences, he introduces us to the individuals who impacted his own life and started him on his personal journey toward positivity.

As the son of a doctor, growing up in a family of 12 children, his early role models were the family members who first taught him life's lessons. In his later years, as a young medical student, husband and father, he demonstrates how he used the wisdom culled from childhood to make his personal and professional life more fulfilling.

His lessons are organized around 10 cornerstone themes, representing the principles of positive leadership. Through the first-person accounts which illustrate these themes, he demonstrates how each of us has the power to be a leader. These personal challenges encourage us to explore and apply the universal truths to our own lives.

It is a book which teaches, not preaches. Whether we read it from beginning to end or dip into favorite passages, the book gives us the motivation to harness positive energy in order to enrich our own lives and the lives of those we touch.



to Harold Smith.

With best regards,

Mike Magee *ms*

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Lessons for Positive Living

MIKE MAGEE, MD

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To Trish and our children, Mike, Sue, Mitch,
Marc and Meredith

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• • INTRODUCTION • •

I grew up in a family of 12 children, the son of a doctor. My father's office was attached to our house, an extension of our living room. Ever since we could walk, my brothers and sisters and I lived part of our lives in that eight-room office, watching, and sometimes participating, in the special positive magic that goes on between those who need care and those who are entrusted to deliver it. In those years, in the early '50s, the physician, armed with little in the way of medicine, technology, and treatment, was an impressive role model. My father was as concerned about a family's financial health or marital problems, as he was about new immunizations or a broken leg. He knew the families, frequently visited their homes on house-calls, bartered, embraced, laughed and cried with them. He was a leader.

When I grew up, I wanted to be like him. I went to medical school, trained to be a surgeon, and moved with my young family to rural New England. On my first day of work in 1978, the Chairman of Surgery said to me, "I'm glad I'm not in your shoes. I'm glad I'm close to retirement." Since that time, I have devoted a large portion of my life to understanding the attitudinal gap between my father and that physician. What had made him negative and how might it be reversed in him and others?

Each of us possesses the ability to positively impact others. Yet most of us do not consider ourselves leaders. But, as you will see, we underestimate the good we do.

My journey pursuing a positive and balanced life has carried me down a road that has been interesting and challenging, one that has given me the opportunity to meet and learn from many people in many walks of life. These people have expanded on my father's vision, while remaining remarkably true to his core principles. You will hear their voices throughout this book.

The lessons presented here are organized in a logical, simple and understandable manner, including 10 cornerstone themes and 52 personal challenges. The suggested techniques and examples are real. They do not require a special talent or aptitude, but rather the willingness to explore and the determination to act positively. This will likely require direct action on your part and a commitment to personal self-improvement. But, in return, you will acquire the positive energy necessary to make a profound difference in the lives of those you touch and contribute to a more balanced and peace-filled society. Simply stated, you will discover the positive leader you already are.

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No. 1

PRINCIPLES

Principles are at the center of each human being. They are the architecture upon which our personality is draped. They are the cornerstones or foundation blocks that our friends and acquaintances count on in their interactions with us. They are sometimes inborn, seemingly inherited as in "She has grandma's good nature," or learned qualities tested by crisis like courage. Principles are what speakers recount when eulogizing a lost friend. "He was kind to all, open and understanding." "She had values that she lived up to." "He was committed to a life of service." Positive leaders stand for something, and that something has a visible impact on their worlds and those living in them.

• • 1 • •

Be Nice

“The meaning of good and bad, better and worse, is simply helping or hurting.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It's remarkable how, in one's life, the most memorable acts of kindness are frequently simple actions exquisitely timed. There are many times when kindness seems to have been extended almost with divine providence, for kindness often arrives when there is the greatest need, when humans are discouraged or distraught, when they are scared or hopeless, when they are about to lose faith in themselves. At those times, positive people seem to sense the need and fill the void. I grew up in a family of 12 children. I was number four and by the time my wedding day arrived, the weddings were coming fast and furious. The day of my wedding, everyone seemed to be doing their own thing and I was nervous and overwhelmed. My sister, Pat, came up behind me and whispered, “Mike, can I make you breakfast on your wedding day?” Now, nearly 25 years later, I still remember how nice that felt and still feel a need to say thank you although I have mentioned it many times. Such is the power of human kindness. Such are the underpinnings of a healthy civilization.

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Be Value-Driven

“Assume a virtue, if you have it not.”

William Shakespeare

Some leaders were blessed at birth with an active conscience, while others have been forced to cover the same ground as an ongoing intellectual exercise. Whether you inherited it or worked for it, an active knowledge of what's right is the cornerstone of all positive leaders. And for this, they sometimes pay the price. When I was eight, I was hanging onto the back of cars after a snowstorm for a free ride. Unknowingly, I hitched a ride on an unmarked police car. Now my father was well-known as the town's family doctor. The policeman jumped out and asked me my name. "Tom O'Brien," I replied. To which he quickly retorted, "Who do you think you're kidding, Magee?" Not blessed with a perfect conscience, that night my father took me over his knee and explained that I would have to learn virtue by instruction.

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Be Constructive

“Any jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a good carpenter to build one.”

Sam Rayburn

So many of us view life as a matter of luck or good breaks, when, in fact, it's really just people helping people. Nearly any fix you find yourself in can end up constructive and instructive or just the opposite depending on the personalities. I played third base for Rotary in the sixth grade. I had a great glove, a lot of interest, but was still working on my skills. During one game a line drive caught me sleeping and went whizzing by on my right. I tripped over my own feet and didn't have time to backhand it so I knocked it down with my bare hand. My hand hurt for a week. I couldn't complete the play and felt like a real jerk. A month or so later, we had our annual Rotary awards dinner and the coach handed out trophies and said a few words about each kid. When he got to me he said, "Magee improved a lot this year. And he showed a lot of guts. Why, in one game he even knocked down a ball with his bare hand." I have always felt kind of lucky that that coach turned out to be constructive and not destructive.

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Be Tolerant

"Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects."

Will Rodgers

Tolerance is based on the firm understanding that perfection is a status all should pursue but that none fully achieve. Tolerance comes more naturally to those who are curious and open to different points of view; to those who are generous and constantly reaching out; and to those who are humble and recognize their own limitations.

My mother-in-law is such a person. As a mother of 10 children ages 6 months to 15 years, she lost her husband. Without insurance, without a job, without even a driver's license, she was left to fend for herself. Her unique ability to turn the tables was visible the day of her husband's funeral as she comforted the grief-stricken community.

It's not surprising then that my wife would later exhibit some of those same qualities. On Mother's Day 1977, I had bought her a bicycle. We were into the fourth year of a five-year residency. It was a beautiful day and our four-year-old, Mitchell, asked for a ride. Not thinking, I put him on the back fender, had him hold tightly to my waist, and headed down the road. About four blocks away, we met a gentle hill and gained speed. Suddenly the bike jammed to a

stop as I felt Mitch being torn away from me. As I rushed to disentangle him and lift him up, I could see his sneakers and socks had been pulled off and his heels were bleeding. The crush marks were visible where his little feet had been caught in the wheels. The strength drained out of me as my grief, my stupidity, and my guilt overtook me, leaving me so weak I could hardly lift his little body.

As we rounded the corner, Trish could see something terrible had happened. Normally quick to speak, that day she remained calm and comforting. Mitch is 21 now, and if you look closely you can still see the scars on his heels. But emotionally, none of us were scarred that day because Trish reached out and reserved judgment.

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Serve Others

“Life engenders life. Energy creates energy. It is by spending one’s self that one becomes rich.”

Sarah Bernhardt

My brother, Bill, and I grew up side by side, sharing a bedroom throughout our lives. From early on I noted he was never alone. He was always surrounded by a ragtag group of kids, all sizes and shapes, all backgrounds. People liked to be with him. In high school he began to date Kathy, whose energy, drive and determination balanced his strengths. From then on their lives remained intertwined as he drove through college, dental school, medical school, and plastic surgery training, and she through nursing school and graduate school in social work. By the time he was ready to practice, they had three kids and he was set up to launch what many predicted would be a stellar academic career. But in that first year, Bill and Kathy were invited to participate in a medical mission to the Philippines to operate on a cluster of children with severe cleft lips and palates. During the week, 150 children received life-changing surgery but, to their astonishment, 250 were left in waiting lines. On the plane home, they vowed to return the next year to finish the job and did. But when the dust cleared, 250 were saved and 400 remained. And more than

that, they noticed that the caregivers who had participated were fundamentally and permanently changed for the better, and that the desire to help a child's smile not only had a lasting effect on the child, but also on the family, the government officials, and the country itself. Now, 10 years later, I occasionally catch Bill and Kathy on "Good Morning America" or in People magazine delivering the same simple message I heard after their very first trip, that changing one child's life can make all the difference in our world. Today their lives are nearly 100 percent committed to service through Operation Smile International, which has put a smile on nearly 20,000 childrens' faces in 15 countries on five continents. Just as importantly, Operation Smile missions directed to New York and Philadelphia currently work with those cities' public school systems to identify children who have fallen through the cracks of the American health care system, children who would benefit from surgery and a new outlook on life. How did all this happen? Two people cared. Two people served. Life engenders life. Energy creates energy.

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No. 2

PEOPLE

Every positive leader I've ever known has been a "people person." The styles may differ. One may be an outrageous extrovert whose enthusiasm can scarcely be contained within her bodily limits. Another may be quiet and gentle, riding to work on a bicycle, and speaking always in the quietest of voices. But all have the unique ability to see the humanness in each individual, to personally connect one-on-one, to chip in and participate, to be content to be themselves, and to uniquely tip the balance in life toward intimacy. When a people person enters the room, it feels better, happier and safer.

• • 6 • •
Be Human

"It is much more important to know what sort of a patient has a disease, than what sort of a disease a patient has."

William Osler

Being in touch to some means effectively communicating from a distance. But truly being in touch means using all of your gifts to transmit feeling as well as information. A gentle pat on the back often communicates much more effectively than a well-constructed letter. My father had all the moves. Sometimes I'd be standing in the office waiting to deliver a message from my mother or ask him a question and I'd just watch him in awe. His face, the ability to light it up, to twinkle the eyes, to wink and smile, the small laugh, the half hug, the full hug, the double handshake, the teasing tap on the arm or firm pat on the shoulder, the quick step to meet a person or rapid squat to get down on the level of a child and look at him eye-to-eye, the full embrace, the tear in his eye, the kiss on the cheek, the enduring hug. He had all the moves. He was human.

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Be Personal

“Advice to a young man who wants to get ahead without any annoying delays: Don’t write about Man, write about a man.”

E.B. White

We humans are intrigued by real people with real lives. We are fascinated by hearing their names, their relations to the storyteller, how things turn out. We not only follow the story but naturally draw lessons from real life. High-minded moralizations ungrounded in real events often lose our interest and fail to deliver our message. When I was in my senior year of college, we were in the middle of the Vietnam War. I had worked hard, had strong grades, did reasonably well in the standardized tests, but had still not gotten into medical school. It was early March and I was worried. I went to the Dean of Students and told him that I thought that my college should close its pre-med program. He looked at me stunned and asked me what I was talking about. I said to him that I had the highest grade point average in our pre-med program and wasn’t getting into medical school, and if they couldn’t get me in then they should just close down the program and not lead people on. One week later I had an acceptance to medical school. As much as I can reconstruct what happened, the Dean called

in the chairman of the program. The chairman called the admissions committee of the medical school in town, which was blackballing the college because they had made three acceptances the year before, all of which were ignored. I made it personal and because of it got ahead without any annoying delay.

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Participate

"I don't believe in just ordering people to do things. You have to sort of grab an oar and row with them."

Harold Geneen

There's an old saying that if you want to get there fast, row slowly. It refers to crew teams whose competitiveness is as much a product of coordination, flow, and equal participation as it is strength or skill. If everyone is participating and pulling their weight, and if they do it in a manner that doesn't compromise each other's stroke, their progress is swift and predictable. But if one sculler ventures out on his own, or another becomes weary, teamwork disappears and success is compromised. In 1960, we were parents plus ten and still all fit in one car, a three-seat Pontiac station wagon, four in each level. As soon as we'd hop in the car, my mother would start a group sing-along. For years I thought she was just a jolly woman. In actuality, it was a participatory, proactive and positive strategy to get us all "rowing in unison" so we wouldn't kill each other. Leaders have to find ways to be part of the team. They can no longer allow themselves to be observers or owners of the boat. They must seek out ways to participate and be in the middle of the action. This positive cooperation ensures forward-directed visionary thinking because these teams live by the old Sachel Page adage "Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you."

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Be Yourself

“Since you are like no other being ever created since the beginning of time, you are incomparable.”

Brenda Ueland

People who try to be something they are not are on thin ice. You have to go with your strengths whatever they are and work on your weaknesses. It's impossible to do either if you are acting a role. Honesty begins with being honest with yourself. The quickest way to lose self-respect is to be someone you're not. It creates new problems without resolving the ones left behind. My youngest brother, Steven, received his college degree in Economics from Williams and an MBA in Finance from Berkeley. But he discovered on Wall Street that the pursuit of money left him unfulfilled. Today he is an ordained minister. After college my sister, Kathy, was a successful computer programmer with Prudential, but she found it too impersonal, went back for her RN degree, found it too personal, and found her middle ground as she went on to specialize in hospital information services. The famous line from Hamlet reads, “To be or not to be, that is the question.” It punctuates a moment of choice in the play and emphasizes that what we create of our future and what we define as our destiny is a result of actions that we take or avoid to take. What

many fail to realize is that we are constantly in the act of becoming, of using our imagination, creating an image and making it happen. We are fully capable of dreaming it, visualizing it and actualizing it. There is a piece of good news inside of every individual. The problem with living someone else's life is that your dream disappears and the good news never emerges.

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Be Balanced

"When you have two pennies left, buy a loaf of bread with one and a lily with the other."

Chinese proverb

Simplicity and balance go hand-in-hand. The more complex our world becomes, the more likely we are to move off track. Those who are not distracted by money, possessions, fame and fortune, see with the greatest clarity. Proper reflection requires a sense of personal security and an absence of background noise. Time, not money, is the truest indicator of one's priorities and an excellent measure of life balance. When the kids were little, Trish and I got in the habit of awakening one hour before they did to quietly sip a cup of coffee, talk a little, but often simply sit in silence and see the sun rise and hear the birds sing. This was the only time when the world was relatively still, when distractions were minimal, when we could completely feel each other's presence. Now that the children are grown and the initial stimulus has disappeared, we continue the same pattern. It's become part of our life balance.

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No. 3

PLAYERS

Positive leaders recognize that all organized societies, whether they be governments, businesses, schools or families possess both people and players. Players are those categories of individuals that tend to share common language, tools and approaches to problem-solving. In hospitals, for example, doctors, nurses, administrators and trustees are major players. In public schools there are students, teachers, administrators and school boards. In families there are parents, siblings, grandparents, in-laws and friends. An ability to recognize who the players are through careful observation, to understand their defining features and points of view through inclusion and communication, and to develop sound working relationships with them by deflecting credit and extending compliments, are notable in all positive leaders.

• • 11 • •
Be Observant

"You can observe a lot just by watching."

Yogi Berra

To observe you must stand still and keep your mouth shut at the same time. I find each difficult, and together nearly impossible. But with each passing year it becomes a little bit easier to quietly involve myself in the achievement of others without seizing the stage. Being in practice in a rural setting helped me a lot. My patients and their families always had little gifts and stories that went with them. They'd introduce me to their friends and families and a variety of interests, whether it be how to tie a fishing fly, how to gather wild mushrooms, how to make a guitar with your own hands, or how to polish rocks and make them look like gems. Many times it seemed easier to listen to them and learn from them than from my own colleagues. My kids still tell the story of the time we were invited by one of my patients to go maple sugaring just after a rain storm. We went up onto a big, tall mountain in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts and all climbed onto the back of a tractor as Bucky Dole headed off into the woods. You could see the trees with the cores dripping sap. As we rounded the first turn, I saw this white pail filled with clear fluid. Bucky looked at me and said, "Get that pail, Doc." I

jumped off and obediently picked up the pail, dumped out its contents and threw the pail into the trailing cart attached to the tractor. Bucky gave me a dirty look and said, "Doc, what the heck are you doing? You just dumped a couple of days' worth of sap." I realized I needed to be more observant.

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• • 12 • •
Be Inclusive

“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may not remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.”

Native American saying

When someone lectures, we generally receive information with one sense. When we are shown, perhaps three senses. But when we are truly involved and fully engaged, we use all of our senses and sharing moves in both directions. It is not surprising that interactive learning has many advantages over passive learning and some risks. When we were kids, my brothers and I once included our little brother, Chris, in a game called “Cannon Ball.” We laid on our backs with feet up, sat Chris on our feet, and catapulted him back and forth. On the fourth toss, Chris’ path veered and he broke his arm, which sounds bad. But we like to think that Chris’ interest in pursuing a career as an orthopedic surgeon began that day. In New England we lived next door to George Dallas, a lovely older man, who enjoyed talking and construction, in that order. One of my patients was supervising the building of an addition on our house and each day George would appear on site as one of the crew. I said to my patient, “Is George bothering you?” He responded, “Not at all, Doc. Someone has to listen to our older folk.” What my patients had to say, what

they knew, what they were dreaming was fascinating. They taught me how to listen to my own colleagues, how to learn from them. They demonstrated that the burden of leadership becomes increasingly lighter as one grows old because it is naturally shared by an ever broadening base of wisdom and talent accessed through inclusion.

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• • 13 • •
Deflect Credit

“As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. When the best leaders’ work is done, the people say, ‘We did it ourselves.’”

Lau Tzu

Successful teams in organizations work through great leaders rather than for great leaders. This is because they so effectively communicate a vision, so wisely delegate, and so inspirationally motivate that the team moves as one, wise beyond a single intellect, all eyes and ears monitoring the creation and its impact as a finely tuned orchestra executing a composition in perfect harmony. And as the conductor reacts to applause by turning and distributing it through gestures to an appreciative orchestra, so to the positive leader is quick to identify by name all who should be recognized for special effort. In a more proactive stance, you will often see the engaged parent behind the scenes, selecting playmates or teachers or opportunities for her child which set the stage for success. The child is rewarded, receives the credit but often does not know or appreciate until much later the parent’s role as a positive leader in her life. But it is not always good to deflect credit. In the big old house that we grew up in we had a huge bathroom with a laundry shoot that connected the second story with the base-

ment laundry room. One day, when I was six and my older brother, Bill, was nine, we were getting ready for our evening baths and I dared him to pee down the laundry shoot. With some coaxing, he rose to the challenge. Shortly afterward, my mother was emptying the shoot and picked up the scent. Briefly into the interrogations, I deflected credit and offered up that it was Bill's idea and he should be rewarded. He was, with 25 spansks.

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• • 14 • •
Communicate

"Self expression must pass into communication for its fulfillment."

Pearl Buck

We commonly think we have communicated when we have not. Dysfunctional communication is a primitive display of emotions, poorly organized, poorly displayed, variably reaching its target audience and failing to accomplish an emotional exchange. When there is real communication you will always be able to detect it because specific action invariably follows. This action may be more a function of how we say things than what we say. Great communicators will tell you that straightforward speech conceived in good common sense is essential, but passion for your subject saves you. I heard a long time ago "Act in earnest and you will feel earnest." Communication involves the ability to inform, convince, persuade and entertain. It has little to do with dazzling individuals with exclusive knowledge, but rather with honesty and directness packaged in pictures and images that float before your eyes. Early in his life my brother, Jack, was a professional actor. He has a wonderful face, with dazzling eyes that spring to life on television. For my 40th birthday, Trish put together a video including messages from everyone. Jack had

moved to California and I hadn't seen him in a long time. I still remember his "guest appearance." Leaning casually against an old car, the camera zoomed in, and in the most direct and personal way, he wished me a happy birthday, acknowledged we hadn't seen as much of each other as we should have in the first 40 years, hesitated and then said hopefully, "But maybe we will change that in the next 40." I've made a point of visiting Jack since then. If you are speaking about something that you've earned the right to talk about; if you are showing respect and affection for your audience; if you are appealing for action in a straightforward way with good common sense, then you will get a positive response.

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• • 15 • •
Be Complimentary

"I can live for two months on a good compliment."

Mark Twain

In many ways we humans are so simple. We are easily pleased by those we respect. What is positively amazing to me is that it requires little more on most occasions than a pat on the back or "you did a great job on that." A leader's job is to help formulate, motivate and congratulate. Recently I asked Trish what she thought of my eyebrows. She looked at me puzzled and responded, "Not much, why?" I mentioned to her that every morning before I headed off to school as a young boy, my mother would call me to her, lick her index finger and smooth my eyebrows and say, "You have such beautiful eyebrows." Now, clearly there was a part of me that realized that I was not particularly blessed with brows so unusual that they deserved this type of attention. Yet I still remember the drill. Why? Because this specific targeted transference of touch communicated that she valued me and that I was something special. She knew how to compliment and it didn't take much.

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No. 4

POWER

Power is all about influence and what you do with that influence. The desire to define the agenda and move individuals to one point of view is universal. In fact, the dynamic tension that we commonly feel at home, at school, or at work, reflects our competitive instinct and desire to "carry the day." But what distinguishes the positive leader is as much the process of influence as it is the outcome of influence. For she recognizes that the end does not justify the means, since the final outcome is a product of the means or method and the end itself. Positive leaders are alert to opportunities to advance important goals, but consistently exercise the high road in that pursuit. They are confident but never overconfident, and they scrupulously avoid reckless competition. In the exercise of power, the positive leader's rewards must be lasting rewards.

• • 16 • •
Seize the High Road

“I learned long ago not to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides the pig likes it.”

Cyrus Ching

To be a positive leader means to use power wisely and for the benefit of others. Power routinely corrupts especially in the hands of negative leaders fueled by predatory instinct and energized by the digestion of friends and foes alike. A positive leader's power flows from example, an ability to unite, and the capacity to convince and motivate toward the good. The negative leader's power is tied to a unique capacity to promote fear in a public forum and on an emotional platform. Without this platform, the negative leader is powerless since his message contracts under independent critical examination. In my early days in hospital management, I learned a valuable lesson. I entered this world with great naiveté. I was at my first medical executive committee meeting, and watched as a very powerful physician who worked 80 percent of the time at a competing hospital, and 20 percent of the time at ours, stood up and denigrated every one in sight in a very personal, nonfactual way, ending up with me as the new guy on the block. Having come from a small rural setting where communication was simple and direct, I stood up and simply said that I

could not support this type of communication, that it painted both the speaker and his profession in a bad light, and that if he wanted to speak with me, he would need to learn how to do it in a respectful manner. He went ballistic. But before the next meeting, he had resigned. If you have the courage to stand up for what you believe, most of the time the problems solve themselves.

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• • 17 • •
Be Aware

“Don’t think there are no crocodiles because the water is calm.”

Malayan proverb

Negativity is pervasive in our world. And negative leaders compete with positive leaders in every organization. In rapidly transforming industries, change adds fodder to the fires of fear, creating within the people a state of active receptivity to a negative message. Martin Luther King said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” But if positive leaders are to prevail, they must be vigilant. On the one hand they must create a positive vision for the future that guides and stabilizes transition, while on the other be prepared to challenge the negative messages day after day. I once received a call from a physician’s wife on a Monday evening. I had worked closely with her husband, I as a surgeon, he as an anesthesiologist at a prior hospital. We had moved nine months earlier. She called to let me know that her husband was in trouble. He was a quiet, gentle man who was the anesthesiologist in whom I had had the greatest confidence. She explained to me that he had been tremendously overworked and had become

irritable several times in the operating room. Two or three surgeons, who I had known to be fairly predatory, approached the CEO and demanded aggressive action. His wife explained to me that a special meeting of the medical executive committee was planned for the following day to publicly censure him. She asked if I could help. That evening I called the institution's new CEO at his home. He had been on the job for only six months and explained that he was feeling great pressure from these powerful surgeons, realized that this was a bit of an overreaction, but was anxious not to lose their support. I acknowledged the pressure he must be feeling, but asked him to consider the possible repercussions of his actions. If this wonderful physician, who had served his institution and community so well for nearly 20 years, was publicly humiliated, was he prepared to defend himself and his institution based on the facts, if this normally meek and mild positive individual decided to confront his attackers in a formal, legal way? More importantly, what did he plan to do when the surgeons came back with their next victim? It might even be him. Confronted, a more moderate course emerged and the meeting was cancelled. The predators wanted my friend to see a psychiatrist. What they should have been doing instead is sending the doctor and his wife on an all-expense-paid, two-week vacation to Hawaii.

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Avoid Reckless Competition

“When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.”

African saying

Open conflict runs the risk of ending badly for the positive leader and the people she serves. Generally speaking, the negative leader is more familiar and skilled in the use of anger as a tool. Reckless competition emphasizes personalities over issues and denigrates all associated. As a result, the customer is left unserved as the status quo is generally reinforced. Negative passion often diverts attention away from crucial issues and areas that demand change. I was contacted once by a magazine around the holiday season and asked what I would wish for health care as a New Year's resolution. Here's what I wrote: "My wish for tomorrow is that all those who share the responsibility for the health of our citizens and our communities be motivated not by reckless competition or the personal desire for power, but by an enlightened vision of a world where every child felt wanted and every heart bred hope." One's view of the world affects one's view of competition. In most of the battles I've witnessed, there are more losers than winners.

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• • 19 • •

Guard Against Overconfidence

"A guest sees more in an hour, than a host in a year."

Polish proverb

In the heat of a power struggle, it is easy to lose sight of your own limitations and ignore legitimate conflicting points of view. Winning becomes more important than understanding. Since you've convinced yourself you know all the answers, you become the source of both the question and the reply. In a public setting, the leader who can acknowledge the contributions made by an adversary sends a signal to all that something alive and functional exists between his ears. I was once copied on a memo that was sent out from a young, brash trauma physician to approximately 20 colleagues. He was criticizing a variety of community hospitals within a 100-mile radius for what he viewed as bungling the care of injured patients. The transfer of injured patients from the community hospitals, where they had arrived, to the medical center was frequently delayed. Having originally come from one of the referral hospitals, I was aware from first-hand experience that it was very difficult to get approval for a transfer in the middle of the night to our academic medical center, and that many of the community physicians had learned to refer elsewhere to protect their patients rather than

fight the bureaucracy. I sent back a memo to him and all of those who had originally received his communication titled, "Guard Against Being Too Knowledgeable" which outlined the major issues and a different course of action. Predictably, he appeared in my office the next day outraged. But behind closed doors, he learned an important lesson that if you choose to go public in writing on an issue, you must understand all points of view and have your facts correct.

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Seek Lasting Rewards

"It is better to deserve honors and not have them, than to have them and not deserve them."

Mark Twain

Somewhere between choosing one's life work and doing it, many of us become diverted. We are subtly compromised by intellectual competition fueled at the earliest stages. Competition is addictive and not easily discarded. To win, to be the best, to hear our names stated publicly become the goals. The pace, the consuming responsibility, and the dampening of emotions crowd out normal feelings and commitment to family, friends and self. Financial rewards are offered to compensate for our inattention to our real responsibilities. Without a great deal of care, power does corrupt. Laboring for money, possessions, and personal recognition are signs of a life out of balance. My path has carried me from the smallest health organizations to the largest and back again, and the loss of potentially positive leaders to power, money and ego has remained remarkably consistent. Health leaders could benefit with a lesson from their patients. One study of 450 people who lived to be 100 outlined the following keys to their success. They kept busy. They went to bed early and got up early. They were free from worry and fear. They had

serene minds and faith. They practiced moderation. They ate lightly and simply. They had a great deal of fun in their lives. Stated another way, "To be happy, have a clean soul, eyes that see romance in the common place, a child's heart, and spiritual simplicity."

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No. 5

PARTNERSHIPS

Positive leaders recognize that no one is perfect, and that the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts. The individual styles of collaboration may vary greatly. Some embrace a prolonged process that allows every person her say even if it seemingly takes forever. Others' internal dynamics demand a more rapid pace and short circuit the system with multifaceted opinion-gathering techniques, a "touch all bases" instinct, and a persona that engenders sufficient confidence to fill in the missing pieces. While styles may differ, the basis for partnership building is consistent. These individuals respect others and are careful listeners. Their ability to be a friend, while at the same time taking risks, instills confidence and loyalty and creates the palpable magnetism that consistently attracts new partners.

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Be Respectful

“As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.”
Abraham Lincoln

Positive leaders seek not to control, but rather to inspire. The best are not walled off by steep interfaces and symbols of their own importance, but immersed instead in the culture and the people. Rules, regulations and titles are not necessary to recognize these leaders. One only need follow the eyes of the employees and watch their faces, their attention and comfort in the presence of their leader. Respect flows in two directions in a healthy, positive organization. As a young surgical resident at the University of North Carolina, I met Ruby within one month of my arrival. I had just scrubbed in for one of my first surgical cases. I was to assist the Chairman of Surgery on an appendectomy. As I backed through the door, hands up and freshly scrubbed, into the Operating Room, I was scooped up by a pair of arms and hustled right out. As it turns out, I had forgotten to put on a surgical cap, and with my hair blowing in the wind, Ruby had rescued me while the Chairman's back was still turned. Over the next five years, she guided and directed my progress in the operating room, along with hundreds of other residents. Short and stout, Ruby was a woman of genuine goodness,

with a smile that went ear to ear, and a personality that literally reached out and embraced you. She had been sharing her unique brand of leadership and friendship with young residents, taking them “under her wing,” for more than three decades. Our respect and love for her was simply a human response to her respect and love for us. She taught us respect for the patients, respect for the surgical team, respect for the art and science of our work, respect for each other, and respect for ourselves.

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Listen

"Each person's life is lived as a series of conversations."

Deborah Tannen

Listening is an art. To some it comes naturally. To most, it must be practiced. When I first began in management, I had a terrible time of it. Each week we would have a Vice Presidents' meeting and I just couldn't help myself. There was this inner voice that kept forcing out "words of wisdom." I knew it was obnoxious, but it was beyond my control. Then one week I discovered the solution to my problem. On my yellow pad, in huge letters, I wrote "Shut Up! Shut Up! Shut Up!" I found I required this triple reinforcement. With time, it helped me gain control and learn to listen. You must learn to stay with the conversation rather than move ahead of it. Listen rather than formulate your response to the next question. You must appreciate that time is a currency and that the proper sharing of it communicates respect for another's contribution. You must be mindful that your style may be too forceful or too abrupt, that it penetrates the quiet. In healthy organizations, quiet is not the absence of sound, but the presence of listening.

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Be a Risk Taker

"There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."

John F. Kennedy

What is short term and what is long term is a function of the rate of change. At a gradual pace, it may be reasonable to concentrate predictively on circumstances five or 10 years out. But in rapidly accelerating environments, the best one might be able to do is to define actions one to three years away. In both cases, the positive leader is thinking as far ahead as reality dictates is reasonable. She is predicting the fallout of short-term decisions, weighing, assessing and leveraging in favor of a long-term benefit. Successful risk takers are always attempting to limit the risk. They live in reality and do their homework. Contrast this with one of our three young boys, who at age two was standing on top of a picnic table and without warning dove off head first toward the concrete. Younger and quicker than today, I was able to reach the pavement beneath him before he did. He too was a risk taker, but he had an incomplete grip on reality and, therefore, underestimated the consequences of his actions. Positive leaders make mistakes, some being large, obvious and embarrassing. But they only

make the mistake once. And their capacity to learn, to evolve and catapult off of a poor showing helps create the mystique of the positive leader. They are human enough to try new things and demonstrate vulnerability. But they have the uncanny capacity to move from naive student to master teacher in a single step. Their willingness to risk failure simply reflects their knowledge that success will rapidly follow.

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Be a Friend

“One may have a blazing hearth in one’s soul, and yet no one ever comes to sit by it.”

Vincent Van Gogh

A person can be the greatest mind, the best innovator, the most stirring motivator. But if no one is listening then no one is sharing in it. Leading is about gathering — gathering ideas, gathering resources, gathering people. A positive leader is a friendly bridge; an individual skilled at moving in and out of situations and settings, in and out of organizations and communities, and creating emotional exchanges that traverse obstacles and unite partners without long, word-intensive conversion ceremonies. Turk Newsome, a professor of surgery during my training, was truly a man of few words. I had perhaps five private conversations with him in my lifetime. Each lasted no more than 60 seconds. Each I remember. One was during my second year of residency when walking down a patient corridor. He stopped me and said, “Mike, remember, the difference between good and great is attention to detail,” and then walked away, leaving me to ponder this for the next two decades. Another occurred at a 10-year reunion, when he greeted me in a crowded reception and said simply, “Most people don’t understand what you’re doing, but I do. Keep it

up.” True friends have ways of letting you know they are interested in you. They know what needs to be said, when to say it, and how to say it.

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Be a Magnet

"Make happy those who are near, and those who are far will come."

Chinese proverb

One of the reasons positive leaders are successful is that their early investments blossom. They invest heavily in esprit de corps, in the creation of nurturing environments where all are valued for their contributions and ideas. These leaders never seem to have a problem filling open positions in their organizations. They always attract a line of internal candidates anxious to join the team. Positive leaders are magnetic. People enjoy being around them because they feel better in their midst. Spence Flo was a wonderful old surgeon I met when I first entered practice. Everybody loved him, the nurses, the doctors, the health managers, and patients. I remember watching him and reflecting on the secret of his popularity and success. He was a homey individual, relaxed and easy-going. He was always telling interesting stories, stories sprinkled with real names and real settings. He was known to say, "Getting people to like you is merely the other side of liking them." Within this realm he was comfortable and calm, never missing an opportunity to thank or congratulate someone. In his later years, he was somewhat crippled by an old neck

injury and had difficulty bending low and frequently asked his fellow doctors or nurses to help him with his shoes. He wasn't afraid to display his own vulnerability. Our helping him was part of his healing us. He was a magnetic individual.

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No. 6

PROCESSES

Positive leaders know that things don't just magically happen. Planned or spontaneous, every action is composed of a series of steps, whether it be positive discipline of a child, care for a heart attack victim, or creation of an automobile. Knowing the facts and refining the steps improves the end product and the satisfaction level of all participants simultaneously. This is because most human processes were never thought out carefully to begin with, but resulted from reactive steps successively layered one upon another over many years. Whether inherited from our bosses, our teachers, or our parents, these steps enjoy a level of confidence they do not deserve. Positive leaders critically examine how and why they do what they do, and continuously simplify, refine and improve. They are flexible not habitual, and embrace change rather than resist it.

Embrace Change

"If I had a formula for bypassing trouble I wouldn't pass it around. It wouldn't be doing anybody a favor. Trouble creates a capacity to handle it. Meet it as a friend for you'll see a lot of it and better be on speaking terms with it."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

I can remember as a youngster complaining to my father about a bad teacher and he replied, "Well, you better learn to deal with it because there will be lots of people you'll have to work with and lots of situations you'll have to deal with that you won't like." Sometimes trouble comes in the form of a negative person. More often, it comes in the form of change pushing at a rate beyond what the internal or external environment will tolerate. This was never more clearly demonstrated to me than in the care of spinal cord injury patients. I especially remember one high school student who was a star skier. He was at the top of his game, possibly Olympic bound, when he was injured in a downhill accident which rendered him quadraplegic, with nearly no movement in his arms or legs. I met him nine months into his recovery when he was basically deciding whether to live or die. It was clear that what I was trying to do to help him was being compromised by a lack of cooperation and interest on his part. We reached a turning point one

evening in his hospital room behind closed doors. I had a heart-to-heart discussion with him about whether he had decided to call it quits or whether he would choose to live and make something of himself. I watched his eyes as he struggled with his decision, and all at once you could see his competitive instinct and will reflected as fear and self pity were overtaken by determination. It was an amazing awakening to witness. He embraced change and, with the support of his family and friends, he made a choice for life and evolved. By the time I left that community, he had not only graduated as valedictorian of his high school class, but completed college and was on to graduate school. He had surrendered his security and had found success in school and a wife to spend his life with.

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Know the Facts

“Don’t ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.”

Robert Frost

There’s an irresistible urge among young, aggressive and positive leaders to fly by the seat of their pants. Since their instincts are generally good, they often get by for a period of time. But sooner or later the absence of good information catches up with them. Excellent leaders have the information before they need it. They have it because they ask the right questions; because they know where to find the information; because they surround themselves with people who know how to cleanse and condense it; and because they know how to graphically display it in a format that carries the day. As a result, the positive, information-rich leader less frequently experiences missteps and the need to retrace steps and correct errors. The most dramatic example of this principle that I can remember was a new medical center that had merged two hospitals. They had decided to centralize all surgery at one institution. They put in place an expansion plan at the one site to accommodate the combined volume. What they had failed to realize was that the surgery unit in the institution to be closed was predominantly for small outpatient cases,

while the other was for large inpatient cases. It was only after they had mothballed the one and expanded the other that they realized that they had not done their homework. This became glaringly obvious on the first day of operation when a young mother and father, cradling their two-year-old who had just had ear tubes placed, complained that they were forced to recover next to an open-heart patient who was literally fighting for her life. A year and a half later, after losing many of their surgeons, and a large portion of their political capital, an outpatient surgical facility opened down the hallway from the inpatient one.

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Simplify

"Some of the papers presented at today's meeting tell us what we already know, but in a much more complicated way."

Alphonse Raymond Dochez

The best leaders don't waste time. They have the unique ability to cut to the chase, say it in a few well chosen words. This simplicity enhances message clarity and demonstrates respect for others' time. The model they establish for communication becomes the standard which others embrace. The same direct communication styles have a way of carrying over to process design as well. Just as words are not wasted, neither are steps or time. Respect for simplicity and the real business at hand carries over into strong personal relationships. In contrast, long-winded complexity distracts. But what about taking the time to just shoot the breeze, to show you're a regular person, to develop a relationship. The truth is you are usually interrupting someone's work flow. It only takes a second to smile or give a person a pat on the back. Do that instead. Our greatest success with simple, direct communication came on the birth of our fourth child, a daughter after three boys. While my wife was recovering, the boys and I constructed a banner which we extended across the street which read "Oh boy! Oh boy! Oh boy! A girl!!!" It made the front page of the local newspaper.

• • 29 • •
Be Flexible

"If you look at life one way, there is always cause for alarm."
Elizabeth Bowen

Positive leaders move in and out of roles easily. This gives them the ability to not only offer help, but to actually be helpful. But choosing when to participate and when to patiently delegate can be tricky. The leader who tightly controls occupies his time with minutia, fails to create a positive expectation for delegation, sends mixed messages to entrusted team members, and interferes with positive team bonding that naturally evolves when the team is entrusted with a difficult challenge. Sometimes being flexible means adjusting your style and needs to those of your team members. One of the great joys of living in New England during the '80s was growing up with the Celtics and Larry Bird. We'd all gather around the TV and marvel at what he and his teammates were able to do together. There were a thousand ways to win, and they seemed to be able to find the right one for every circumstance. It's scary to think what might have happened if Larry Bird and his teammates had worked for a micro-managing coach.

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Be Realistic

"We should take care not to make intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality."

Albert Einstein

Positive leaders are often guided by passion, passion for intellect, passion for work, and passion for ideas. They agree with Yeats who said "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." The same emotion that energizes them and fuels their success can also lead to their downfall. For positive leaders to sustain their contributions over a long period of time, they must reinforce basic values that cut across all elements of their lives, both professional and personal. They must invest time in basic values and in revitalizing relationships, protect their families, and frequently refocus their attention and limit their sphere of interest. This is especially difficult for the positive leader who is rising in her career because those around her will offer a wide variety of opportunities, all of which seem too good to pass up. For her, patience has not yet become a virtue. But burn-out is a real risk and part of the reason why this brand of leader is heavily outnumbered by more traditional and negative ones. One good indicator of realism is proper pacing and proper negotiation of obstacles. As kids, we used to turn out all the lights and play

hide and seek in the dark. We never had to set a time limit on the game because it always ended itself. Someone would start crying. We'd turn on the lights. The blood would be flowing from the collision. My mother would escort the wounded into the office, and my father would sew him or her up. The pace was too fast and the obstacles unrecognized. If we truly wish to protect the stock of positive leaders, we must teach them patience early and assist them in protecting themselves and their families by realistically controlling and balancing their lives.

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No. 7

POSITIONING

The most successful positive leaders have an almost uncanny ability to be both creative and highly focused at the same time. They have learned to gradually shed “fuzzy thinking” at the edges and precisely visualize what they’d like to have happen. While others dream great dreams, these individuals follow through with immediate action. If not master implementers themselves, they surround themselves at home, in the community, and at work with doers. They are able to continuously evolve without losing focus on complex interwoven objectives. But, they understand the secret — to aim high first, then focus. While soaring above, their feet are firmly fixed on the ground perfectly positioned.

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Aim High and Focus

*“If you would hit the mark you must aim a little above it.
Every arrow that flies feels the attraction of the earth.”*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

When I was 15, I went out looking for a Christmas gift for my mother and father on December 24. The competition was great as I maneuvered through the crowds and went from store to store. Just as I was about to give up on the possibility of ever finding a truly unique and worthwhile gift for my parents, I saw it. There before my eyes was an artificial tree being magically showered with styrofoam “snow.” It was beautiful. I took a closer look at the mechanics and discovered a cardboard catch basin at the base that captured the styrofoam balls which were then fed into a small pump-powered tube that went up the trunk and released the “snow” high above to safely float downward through the branches. It was \$14.95, a stretch, but no sacrifice was too great for the price of beauty. I rushed home and secretly focused all my energy on setting it up on our tree and then headed off to get a few last things done. When I returned, the whole shooting match was laying out on the curb and my mother was furious. Seems the pump exploded and there was “snow” all over the house. Being a trend setter is not without risk.

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Take Action

"It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails admit it frankly and try another, but above all try something."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I was raised on the adages "If you think about it, do it" and "There's no time like the present." In general, the principle of immediate action has served me well. But it is worth considering a caution. My wife's grandfather frequently advised, "If you're considering a big purchase or a large decision, always wait two weeks before you decide." The expert leader is able to find a way to honor both these viewpoints. The first says that a reputation for consistent inaction or caution is inconsistent with leadership. Leaders are expected to have sufficient clarity of thought, spontaneous brain power and commitment to action to favor forward momentum. It is by action that the leader controls the agenda. But the leaders that stick around for a while can spot a landmark decision coming and turn the information-gathering machinery into high gear. You'll see them clear their calendars to attack complex problems so that the necessary delay to sort out the issues and make a critically correct decision is maximally contracted. That way their reputation for both action and accuracy is sustained.

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Be Precise

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug."

Mark Twain

Effective communication is based on clarity of thinking. It's interesting how often an individual's confidence dissolves when he is asked to commit his thoughts to writing. For the written word demands words and figures rather than thoughts and general notions. Some leaders resist the written word for fear of being "nailed down" on an issue. Others decline because they suffer a weakness present with surprising frequency, the inability to write well at a reasonable pace. They fear criticism and as Christopher Hampton noted, "Asking a working writer what he thinks about critics, is like asking a lamppost how it feels about dogs." But many or most stay away because they are not accustomed to collecting data, organizing their thoughts, and making a succinct and convincing case. In contrast, successful positive leaders are anxious to commit their beliefs and arguments to writing, and are constantly bubbling to the top sequential facts arranged in a convincing manner. And those who are clear on paper are superior oral communicators as well. One caution, not every-

thing that is written or spoken is true. As George Burns said, tongue in cheek, "Too bad that all the people who know how to run the country are busy driving taxi cabs and cutting hair."

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Be Evolutionary

"Growth to man is a temporary surrender of security."

Gail Sheehy

Nobody is perfect. We all have strengths and weaknesses. But positive leaders distinguish themselves by a willingness to wander into hostile or uncharted territory accepting the risk of failure and learning in the process. One of our very good friends is a physician who grew up in a small town in Argentina. When Oscar was four, his parents sent him to school with their six-year-old son who was very shy. The village teacher immediately noticed the younger boy's interest and aptitude, and after that the family and the town got behind Oscar. They eventually sent him away to high school, to college, and then to medical school. One day he noticed a friend studying English and asked what he was up to. The friend said he was studying for exams that would qualify him for a medical license in the United States. Oscar offered to help, working with him each night for a year and in the process picked up English. When the time for exams came, he decided to take them as well, passing the Science and English components while his friend fell short. Another friend was going to Buffalo for an intern year and told Oscar of an opening. Off he went and was quickly embraced by the residents and

professors there who felt he might have the makings of a surgeon, and set him up with a training program in Philadelphia. Five years later, he moved with his wife to a small New England community and his practice grew. There was a large city 21 miles away with a sizeable Spanish-speaking population. Oscar reasoned he could be of service there so he applied for privileges at the Medical Center in town and had his requests blocked by competitors for two years. Running out of legal reasons to prevent his entry, the doctors showed him a map and noted that he must live within 20 miles of the facility and he was 21 miles away. Oscar promptly sold his house, moved one mile in and received his privileges. He opened a satellite office one-half day a week in the city and within one year made it his major site to respond to the explosive demand. For three years, the doctors who resisted his entry refused to say hello or even make eye contact with him in the hospital hallways. During that time, he was always careful to have a pen with him because he knew no one would loan him one. But they underestimated Oscar's lifelong ability to adapt and evolve. Within five years, Oscar added four more partners and controlled the market in his field. He had gone with the flow, attracted strength and support along the way, and faced challenges others dared not confront. Opportunity was there and he recognized it.

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Address the Real Issues

"The mind of the bigot is like the pupil of the eye - the more light you pour upon it, the more it will contract."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

A common obstacle facing the positive leader is the hidden agenda. I can remember one time getting into a horrendous fight with one of my brothers who borrowed my baseball glove. My mother had to intervene and try to figure out why I was causing such a fuss. "Were you using it?" "No." "Did he hurt it?" "No." "Is it missing?" "No." "Then what's the problem?" "Don't you understand, Mom, it's mine. That's the problem." Whether it be prejudice, personality conflicts, or job insecurities, hidden agendas are part of the currency of the negative leader who molds and kneads these behind-the-scenes issues, fanning the fires of fear to solidify his hold. Key to control is the process of segmentation, working multiple sets of issues in an individualized manner, hyperbolizing, suggesting, inflaming and preventing collaboration by instilling anger and contempt. Yet all cruelty springs from weakness, and combatting these destructive behaviors is as easy as surfacing the knotty issues and exposing the need for constructive action. Doesn't the room blow up? Not in the hands of a positive leader. Her mastery of the language of human relations

almost always allows enough wiggle room to present the issue and diffuse it simultaneously, sometimes in a single sentence. Once exposed to the truth, fear is no longer a weapon, and the real issues may then be addressed.

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No. 8

PERSONALITY

Positive leaders use all their natural skills to connect. Their actions seem effortless, though non-leaders find these traits impossible to replicate. Their secret is that they love people and feed off the contact. To touch and embrace is not reaching out for them, but pulling in. They are pleasers and find their own happiness in others' smiles. They laugh easily. They are not Pollyannas, but courageous in surfacing difficult issues and combating collective fears which they do not fear themselves. They are personally secure, but not complacent. Rather, they are driven by passion for they believe strongly in many things. They freely expose their strengths and weaknesses. Their humanity is on full display.

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Laugh Often

“He deserves paradise who makes his companions laugh.”

The Koran

Our first son was recently married by Father Eugene O'Brien, the priest who had married us and baptized him. In his sermon to Mike and Suzanna he said that the most important ingredient to a successful marriage is laughter. He went on to say that laughter would cure 95 percent of the daily crises and challenges that they might encounter, and their strength, commitment and love for each other would surely carry them the other 5 percent of the way. Laughter does a great deal more for us than we give it credit. It introduces new people and ideas in a gentle way, but with exquisite penetrance. It exposes our human natures. It places our human flaws and environmental problems on the table where they can be addressed. It breaks the tension when things are getting too hot and livens the mood when emotions are too cold. Humor reflects intelligence and quickness. It is the shortest distance between two people. Humor for a positive leader involves real and personal stories that expose humanity and vulnerability. My sister, Sue, was number 10 in the family. As she emerged from adolescence, my mother had just about had it with

the surliness of the teenage years. Sue had a habit of coming in from high school each day with a frown on her face, and without so much as a hello to my mother, barking, "What are you cooking for dinner?" One day, to her surprise, my mother barked back, "Fried shit, Susie, that's what we're having. Fried shit!" They both laughed and her behavior improved.

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Touch and Embrace

“The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted.”

Mother Theresa

Medicine is one of the few professions where human touch is an expectation, rather than an invasion of privacy. In most fields of work, an individual's space is rigidly adhered to. Yet in the health profession, the lack of touch is considered a failing. This reflects all humans' need for intimacy, especially when emotionally or physically compromised, as well as the real role that touch plays in healing. When I first began in practice, I was surprised how my patients cared for me. Many of them were older and I must have seemed quite young and needy. They'd pat me on the back when they came to see me, or rub the side of my arm, or grab my hand and insert it in the hand of their husband or wife, "This is my doctor." They'd have me hold their grandchildren and do hundreds of other little things that conspired to put me in physical contact with themselves and their lives. They seemed to understand that I needed that. I would, in turn, extend myself physically their way and I began to notice and catalog over the years the best examples. I once had a patient dying of cancer who was bedridden in the hospital and preparing for death. I came

around on rounds one morning and discovered, to my surprise, the patient dancing with a nurse in his room. He was beaming. The nurse noted my disbelief and said to me, "He wanted to dance one more time." What a wonderful person she was. What a wonderful leader she was.

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• • 38 • •
Overcome Fear

"It is not power that corrupts, but fear. The fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it, and the fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it."

Aung San Suu Kyi

Negative leaders have great power in our world and in our daily lives because fear is a powerful currency. Fear is easy to exchange and easy to access. It can be counted on in most environments to draw an immediate response. The negative leader when challenged about his methods will frequently respond, "I'm just being brutally honest." Yet, as one man has said, these individuals "get more satisfaction from the brutality than from the honesty." Those who cower in fear also bear responsibility. They have not defined what will be the ethical limit for them. How far will they be pushed before resisting? The job of positive leadership involves not only confronting the source of fear, but also in liberating its subjects. I once discussed this issue with a colleague, a bright, outgoing individual who had grown up poor but with strong ethical roots. Along the way, in the pursuit of power and other rewards, he had developed allegiances with individuals less grounded. When I challenged him on what he had become, he responded that he was already in too deep, owed too much, and had promised loyalty. He

said the same would happen to me. I replied that I was at peace; that there was nothing he could do to hurt me. He responded that I could be hurt and that it just hadn't happened yet. To which I replied, "No, you don't understand. You have nothing that I want." I had already defined my ethical limits. And within those parameters, I was protected from their influence. As Eleanor Roosevelt noted, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

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Lead in Crisis

"In Chinese, the word for crisis is weiji, composed of the character wei, which means danger, and ji, which means opportunity."

Jan Wong

At various stages in my career I have been immersed in crisis. Some have been very personal like being a 25-year-old resident caring for a two- and three-year-old brother and sister, each with 90 percent burns, each of whom eventually died. Other times I have entered voluntarily because the situation required some positive intervention. Once there was the death of a 35-year-old head nurse who was everybody's favorite in a small rural hospital. She was suddenly lost to a brain aneurysm. I wrote an editorial in our local newspaper the next morning. Another time we lost a wonderful and gentle surgeon to an automobile accident. He was 52 and had married late in life. He had two young boys. I assisted in the memorial arrangements. These were small gestures, but properly timed. If there was ever a need to exercise positive leadership, it is at times of crisis and tragedy. For these moments of struggle invite the participation of people who can see beyond the event and who instinctively sense the lesson to be learned — people who can take the powerful and potentially destructive emotions that have escaped and channel them to some constructive good.

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Be Passionate

"People living deeply have no fear of death."

Anais Nin

A long time ago, Dale Carnegie wrote "The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking." In it he mentioned that he never witnessed a poor speech if the speaker presented material about which he had both knowledge and passion. Those who believe, and believe strongly, present their cases in real life terms and with a sense of urgency transmitted in voice, gesture, eye contact, and facial expression. You can see it in their eyes and in their hands. We live in a world where data and digits have grown exponentially in power and legitimacy, and where feelings are betrayed as weak. Trish and I have learned that raising four passionate children is not always easy. Their feelings, opinions, and beliefs spill out quickly and, in earlier years, sometimes violently. I came home at ten o'clock one evening after an emergency surgical case to find a trail of blood leading to the upstairs bathroom. Two of the boys had been brushing their teeth at the same time and, by mistake, when one was rinsing his toothbrush, the other was spitting and it landed on his hand. The passionate response was immediate and drew blood. When I found the injured one, his lip was gashed. I laid him down on the kitchen table and

sewed him up. It's been said that "the middle class prefers comfort to pleasure, convenience to liberty, and a pleasant temperature to the deathly inner-consuming fire." Not so in our house. Positive leaders do not play it safe.

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No. 9

PENETRATION

When the positive leader makes a point, people listen and the opinion sticks. They have exquisite timing, persistence and the unique ability to paint a picture and seize the moment. They are courageous, often opposing a majority point of view, but never without some certainty of a successful outcome. They pick their battles wisely and only when they believe that a significant issue is at stake. At those times, they hold on as tightly to an issue as a dog on a pants leg. This determination, combined with an aura of being "right most of the time," is a large part of their success. But their real ability to penetrate the mind and soul lies in their verbal skill of painting vivid pictures that graphically display the potential good and bad outcomes of the decisions at hand. When their listeners "see it," they usually see it their way.

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Be Courageous

“One man with courage is a majority.”

Andrew Jackson

Negative leaders have a distinct advantage over positive ones in our world. Their currency — anger, unbridled passion and fear — is easily acquired. The emotion of hatred is forward moving and target specific. But perhaps most important is the fact that negative leadership works. It draws a rapid response from the audience. This is because the majority of our external and internal conversations — reflected in gossip, in what we engage in through media, and in what we think, worry and fear — is negatively based. To confront this environment, the positive leader must courageously attack on two fronts. First, she must publicly, confidently and calmly confront the negative leader. It is surprising how frequently these bullies and cowards melt and disappear. Secondly, she must commit to educating and inspiring her followers, to emptying their minds of the negative, and to filling their minds with hope, inspiration and dreams. The positive leader uses role modeling and exquisite timing for this two prong attack. Take, for example, the action of Rosa Parks in refusing to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Simultaneously, this quiet act of courage from a most unlikely source

confronted an evil and, to that point, impenetrable empire and galvanized the American people to pursue a more hopeful future. A single act of courage. That's all it was. A single act of courage by a woman who instinctively knew what President Clinton verbalized some 30 years later: "There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America."

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• • 42 • •
Be Different

“There is nothing noble about being superior to some other man. The true nobility is in being superior to your previous self.”

Hindu proverb

When you grow up in a large family as I did, you appreciate very early the value of being different. Much of what life's about is an inner struggle to define and become comfortable with who you uniquely are. Alternately, learning to appreciate the uniqueness and style of the varied personalities that you meet and interact with each day is a crucial skill for the positive leader. If I have been aided by growing up in the presence of 11 brothers and sisters and 10 members of my wife's family, our children have been doubly blessed. At their birth, they had 40 aunts and uncles, 20 came from our direct families, paired up with 20 others from a vast array of family experiences, cultures and backgrounds. Each of these is different, one from another. But beyond that, several provide unique examples of personal evolution and the progressive stepwise discovery of new ways of being different in a single life. My oldest sister, Grace, is married to Sam Lewin. His mother, Jeanette, is a perfect example of continuous ongoing differentiation. She grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey and after

college became a registered nurse. She immediately went where the action was, concentrating on emergency room and operating room nursing. Within a short time she was married and together with her husband, a pharmacist, opened a local drug store. As the business grew, they also raised two children and she became an expert in purchasing and sales. Off of that platform, she became aggressively involved in community activities and volunteerism, becoming the President of the DeBoer Heart Hospital Volunteer Support Group and the President of Hadassah. As those challenges were met, she marched forward and went back to school receiving a Bachelors and Masters in nursing. At age 50, she launched a new career becoming a school nurse and subsequently an administrator of school nursing for the Jersey City school system. After 25 years, at age 75, she retired and immediately transitioned into an active role with the Meals on Wheels organization. When my wife recently expressed amazement at her level of engagement, she responded, "What else am I going to do with my time? I like to help people." Being different means more than defining your uniqueness compared to others in this world; it also means constantly evolving and being different from your former self.

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• • 43 • •
Seize the Moment

"Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly."

Robert F. Kennedy

Positive leaders seem to have the most exquisite timing. Yet often when you scratch beneath the surface, what appears to have been spontaneous was well planned. It is their excellent preparation that appears to free up positive leaders to recognize opportunities at hand and act on them with apparent ease. My brother, Danny, has always been like that. One day my father received a call from a little old lady who lived several blocks away. She was calling him to say how proud he must be to have a son like Danny, so helpful and courteous. My father thanked her and inquired what event had led to her call. She said, "Oh, your son picked me up in his car at 6:30 this morning as I walked through the rain to church." Now, I'm sure my father would have appreciated Danny's good will gesture had he not been eleven. It turns out that Danny had a lucrative paper route, now up to 100 papers a day, which he managed to deliver "on time, all the time" by using the family car. Propped up on two folded pillows, Danny had been about his appointed motorized rounds for the past six months, and along the way had been "seizing the

moment” whenever an opportunity arose. The day he lost his wheels, he did not mourn. He had already established his reputation as a dramatic and decidedly positive leader.

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• • 44 • •
Be a Visionary

"New opinions are always suspected, and usually are opposed without any other reason but because they are not already common."

John Locke

As a product of Jesuit schools, I was taught that mediocrity was the greatest sin. What I have learned since then is that the opportunity to reach your full potential is most clearly affected by the extent of one's vision. This is as true for the evolving leader as it is for the newborn. At Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia we set up a "Ready to Learn" Center in our Women and Infants Clinic. It included a model play center, advice on quality pre-school activities, demonstrations on the use of television as teacher, promotion of neighborhood learning, and enhancement of inter-generational relationships that would empower parents with the skills to provide an enriched and secure environment for their children. Our early childhood educators spent as much time training those on the health delivery team as they did the parents and children. The concept was new, that educational potential tied directly to one's health. But the extra focus paid off in a more positive environment and a broader vision of what health is all about. To succeed at anything you have to be able to envision the goal and

focus all of your energy and training upon it. And for every great leader out there, there are one or two mentors who recognize that individual's potential early, adjust it upward, and intervene to encourage and sustain the leader along the way to her appointed mission.

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• • 45 • •
Be Persistent

“What does not destroy me makes me stronger.”

Frederick Nietzsche

I've often reflected on the line from the old spiritual "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Glory Hallelujah." To me it says if you persist, and if you learn from your mistakes, pain today may lead to rejoicing tomorrow. When I was 17, I received my driver's permit. I desperately wanted to drive. My oldest sister, Grace, was coming home from college on a semester break and was being dropped off at her friend's house 30 miles away. I asked my mother if I could go with her and if I could drive. She said yes. At first everything went well. We made it out of the garage and driveway. I was steady on the highway. The turn off was fine and I responded to her oral directions appropriately. As we made the final right onto Maple Street, she pointed to the target driveway. Signal on, I relaxed and that's when it happened. Somehow as my foot went for the brake, it hit the gas, which would not have been so bad if an antique T-Bird wasn't in the driveway, which would not have been so bad if the garage door had been open and the T-Bird hadn't gone through it, which would not have been so bad if there hadn't been a Cadillac inside the garage. When the dust settled both cars and their garage were in shambles. My sister, carrying her suit-

case, got into the car and I asked my mother if I could drive home. I was surprised at my mother's response as she looked at me as if I had lost my mind. "What's the matter, don't you trust me?" I inquired. Well, at least I was persistent. Glory hallelujah!

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No. 10

POSITIVITY

Positive leaders are used to being initially underestimated. For on the surface, they appear different, out of touch, and vulnerable. But beneath, they are war-hardened veterans who have often labored against great odds with little reinforcement. Their strength is a reflection of their unerring faith in a greater good. Their ability to dream and be as playful as a child offers some protection. But their major armor is that they find good in all, and are able to consistently forgive and seek forgiveness. They disarm and convert by their example. Their dreams expand to embrace the dreams of others. Their seemingly limitless energy streams in from those who love them and commit to regularly revitalize them. But their lasting trait is a deeply seated confidence in themselves, for positive leaders like who they are.

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Have Faith

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.”

Helen Keller

The most difficult portion of my training in surgery came during my second year of residency when I was on the pediatric heart team. My job was to take care of the babies in the Intensive Care Unit after surgery, to keep them alive. One Thursday night a very sick child, barely alive, arrived after surgery. The child had been born with an abnormal heart and the mother had refused care. As the child came closer to death, state troopers had been sent to bring the child in. That first night after surgery, the child died, too far gone to be saved. When I called the mother to let her know, I could hear her drop the phone and run, as her screams waxed and waned as she ran from room to room. I was crushed. After a few hours sleep, and a full day of work, I set out to moonlight at a rural emergency room, which I did once a month to make money so that we could visit home at Christmas time. An hour into my tour of duty, a fireman came in with chest pain. We hooked him up to the monitor and he had some irregular rhythms. “I’m going deaf now, doc. Is that normal?” he said. I reassured him and we turned on the defibrillator which we used to shock

the heart back to normal in such cases. "I'm going blind now, doc. Is that normal?" I once again reassured him and noted that he was still conscious. "I'm dying now," he said as his tracing went flat on the monitor. We shocked him and he immediately woke up and looked at me and said, "Doc, you saved my life." All within the space of one day, one twenty-four hour period, from the depths of failure to the heights of success. Life is not always that dramatic, but in every person's life on every day there is a real possibility that failure may be followed by success, a real reason to have faith.

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Be a Dreamer

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. But let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away."

Henry David Thoreau

Trish and I were high school sweethearts. She's kept an eye on me since I was 15. So you might imagine she often knows what's going on in my head before I do. We were married and had our first child while I was in medical school, expanded the family by two more during five grueling years in surgical residency, and added a fourth as we began practice. Yet, within a year, Trish could see that surgery would not sustain me long term. It was not what I dreamed about. One early morning, when the kids were still asleep and we sat there drinking coffee, she let me know it was all right to switch if I wanted. "Just find a way to get paid for it," she cautioned. After all I had put us both through with training, I was amazed by her support. "You need to be doing what you like," she said casually. About the same time, I had begun to consider administration and was running a contest that asked physicians to write what they liked about medicine rather than what they hated. I was at a medical staff meeting and had just finished explaining why I thought every-

one should contribute when a colleague came up to me and said, “Mike, there’s one thing I don’t understand. If it’s so great, why are you leaving it?” This fellow was unable to see, and I was unable to explain, that my dreams and vision were carrying me in a little different direction — a direction that I believed would bring some comfort in the future to a few physicians and a few patients. I was moving to a voice I heard within — a voice that few except my wife, my parents, and a few physicians understood. These few responded to my dream by saying, “Others may not understand, but we do. Keep going.” Positive leaders, whether raising families or building organizations, do not resist diversity. They seek it out and rejoice in it.

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Preserve the Child

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

Pablo Picasso

Perhaps it is the child's ability to openly experience love and instinctively react to it that separates them from adults encumbered by weighty analysis. Perhaps it is their open faces, the way they express joy, the way they come into your life with a running skip and throw themselves trustingly through the air knowing that you will catch them. Children love who they are. Mike was a great talker and story teller. Mitch was a humorist and creative force. Marc was movement and strategic thinking. And Meredith confident and caring. So now we have a poet, and a painter, and a societal futurist, and one confident and caring daughter still free to dream. Our career counseling to them: “Do something you're passionate about. And do something that will make this world a little better. But don't lose sight of who you are.” Not long ago, I was in a half-day strategic planning session and bored to tears. I wrote on top of the pad, “A Few of My Favorite Things.” One thing led to another, and soon I had almost a hundred items. Ninety of them involved childhood. Charles Kingley once said, “We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.”

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Find the Good in All

"If heaven made him, earth can find some use for him."

Chinese proverb

There is a little piece of redemption in even the most difficult or limited human beings. Life is never perfectly good, nor perfectly bad, but always in between. My mother-in-law, known affectionately as Momma June, has a saying, "For every old sock, there's an old shoe." I found that easier to believe than to acknowledge redeeming grace in those who routinely abuse power. There is one phrase from The Lord's Prayer that I have found helpful for many years. It is "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." I find it helpful because when one begins by acknowledging one's own imperfections, it seems much easier to release anger or prejudice directed at others' shortcomings. I, by no means, have this one licked. Like driving too fast, I'll probably be working on it for the rest of my life. But searching for the good in everyone is an effort worth making because it is the doorway toward maximizing your own human potential.

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Find the Good in All

"I desire to conduct the affairs of this administration, that if, at the end . . . I have lost every friend on the earth, I shall have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside me."

Abraham Lincoln

When all is said and done, you have to live with yourself. You have to like what you do. You have to release anger and the desire to blame yourself or others. You have to rejoice in your gifts and acknowledge your weaknesses and failures. St. Frances de Sales said, "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them — every day begin the task anew." Where will that renewal come from? It's a serious question to ask yourself. I once had a discussion with a retired physician who cautioned me about being out of balance. He noted that over the years every Friday night he would head to the university to write and return on Sunday morning. He said he had produced more than 100 published papers and that a couple of them were actually good. But he had found that his two daughters were now grown up, that they didn't know him, and that they had no interest in being with him. Revitalization and renewal for the positive

leader comes from investing time and presence in positive, hope-filled relationships. Being a friend to yourself means being a friend to your spouse and kids. Being a friend to yourself means being well rested. Being a friend to yourself means avoiding being consumed by greed or power or possessions. Mark Twain said, "A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval of his self."

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POSTSCRIPT

No matter how positive you are, you must confront uncertainty for life and loss are interwoven. Positive leaders feel deeply and are as vulnerable as they are durable. Their responsiveness to crisis places them in great demand. Their ability to survive and thrive reflects a unique attitude toward loss. At their core, positive leaders are learners who seek out the lesson with each experience. They see the world as overflowing with opportunity for all and understand that delaying an opportunity in the interest of honoring more pressing priorities, is not an opportunity forever lost. They have great faith and memory which allows them to feel and experience the presence of loved ones even in their absence. Finally, they uniquely fill the voids in their lives, finding productive ways to contribute to the lessons of those who have gone before them. The positive leader is at peace.

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Fill the Void

"Where you used to be there is a hole in the world which I find myself constantly walking around in the day time, and falling into at night. I miss you like hell."

Edna St. Vincent Millay

A year and a half ago, my mother called me abruptly from Florida one day to let me know she was coming up to be checked. She had a sense that something was wrong. The following day, we found that she had widespread ovarian carcinoma. She underwent surgery and chemotherapy and did well for approximately a year, at which time she had a recurrence. About the same time, our first child was married. The two events dramatically placed us in the middle of our lifeline. Here we sat with our mother rapidly approaching the final days of her life and our oldest son and his wife positioning themselves to create new life. Loss is inevitable. Loss of family or friends, loss of relationships, and occasionally lost opportunities. What marks positive leaders is how they fill the void. It may be filled with positive memories and reminders that keep faith and hope alive, or equally with bitterness, anger and regret that widens the void until it overtakes other living things. The loss may be viewed as a failure, or an opportunity to bring success out of failure. When there is a loss, something is missing.

When I was 12, our family sustained a terrible tragedy. My sister, Mary, who was four years old, drowned. It exposed our vulnerability and tested our relationships as blame and guilt bounced from one family member to another. For 18 months we struggled with the absence and the pain. Then one spring morning, my youngest sister, Annbeth, was born — the embodiment of life and spirit and hope. Her birth signaled our survival. I noticed that my father began to whistle again. Twenty years later, when our own Meredith was born, I saw so much Annbeth in her, so much so that if I'm tired, I sometimes call her Annbeth by mistake. I recently had a birthday and was feeling kind of flat. When I got home from work, there was a present from Annbeth. She has a music degree and runs a music school for children. I opened the package and there was a tape. The card explained she had filled the tape with all types of music she thought I would like. I turned it on and the music filled the house. It made me cry. It lifted my spirit. It filled me up. The next morning, I found myself whistling her tunes. It is only those who lose dreaming, who are lost. A positive leader has the energy, the faith, and the hope to fill the void in a manner that honors the loss.

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Be at Peace

"There is room enough at the top for everyone."

Trish Magee

I was raised in an extremely competitive family. This provided me with energy and desire and a great deal of stamina. But what I found in my early years was that the goals that I set for myself became meaningless as soon as they were reached. This created a pattern of dissatisfaction and non-contentment. Beyond that there was an undercurrent of inability to share the joys of others' achievements, since, by definition, winning is about being at the top. And if someone else is there, you're not. About 10 years ago my wife, when she sensed this inappropriate behavior, began reminding me each time it occurred: "There is room enough at the top for everyone." Taken to heart, the thought is very profound. First, it means that your personal success does not need to be tied to someone else's failure. Secondly, it reinforces the belief that supporting others and their successes can be incorporated into your own view of success. Finally, it preaches patience. For if there is truly enough room at the top for everyone, you need not seize every opportunity that arises for fear that that opportunity will be forever lost. That extra room at the top means that there is room for you as well as everyone else.

The opportunities will appear again. One priority may be displaced by another for a period of time without completely abandoning the vision no matter how strong. And if one can be patient, and supportive, and capable of rejoicing in another's success, then peace will follow. And for each changed life, there is renewed hope. For one life touches another, and then another, until society begins to reflect the difference. And as we work together at becoming positive leaders at home, and at work, and in our communities, we will change the world for "civilization is just a slow process of learning to be kind."

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• • ABOUT THE AUTHOR • •

Dr. Mike Magee is professor of surgery at Jefferson Medical College and Senior Vice President at Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital. A prolific writer and inspirational speaker, he is past president of the National Association of Physician Broadcasters and Special Advisor to the American Medical Association on Consumer Education. Son of a doctor, and one of 12 children, his unique brand of positive leadership draws heavily on his rural New England roots. Described by the Boston Globe as "the most optimistic physician in America - Medicine's own Rev. Norman Vincent Peale," Dr. Magee's special message of hope and confidence, captured in the Positive Medicine project he began in 1983, offers a series of guideposts for achieving balance in the '90s. At a time when Americans are being overwhelmed by negative leaders and messages that promote fear and anger, Dr. Magee's personal example and reassuring voice guides us back toward our finer selves.



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Sometimes a book comes along that speaks so directly to the heart that it penetrates the soul. *The Principles of Positive Leadership* is a prescription for positive living from America's most optimistic doctor — medicine's own Reverend Norman Vincent Peale. Powerful in its simplicity, Dr. Mike Magee parallels the insight gained from growing up in a family of 12 children with strategies for positive living. You will be drawn into its heartwarming message and motivated to make your own life more fulfilling. His message is clear: you are stronger than you think, and simple acts of courage and kindness can change our world.

